

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2863

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, KS

SUBJECT: MEETINGS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES

REF: A) SEOUL 7009; B) SEOUL 6931; C) SEOUL 6930

1. SUMMARY: AT OPPOSITION DEMAND, THREE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES MET AUGUST 11 TO DEAL WITH RECENT MAJOR SCANDALS IN ROK. GOVERNMENT WITNESSES WERE SHARPLY QUESTIONED ON THESE ISSUES PLUS OTHER ITEMS OF OPPOSITION INTEREST. ROKG MINISTERS' ANSWERS WERE PERFUNCTORY. END SUMMARY.

2. CONSTRUCTION CMTE DEALT WITH HYUNDAI APARTMENT SCANDAL AND GENERATED MOST INTEREST AND PRESS COVERAGE. RESPONDING TO NDP ACCUSATION, JUSTICE MINISTER DENIED INVOLVEMENT OF ANY ROKG CABINET MINISTER. CONSTRUCTION CMTE, WHICH CONTINUED AUGUST 12, ENDED WITH DEFEAT (ALONG PARTY LINES) OF NDP MOTION TO FORM BI-PARTISAN INVESTIGATIVE TEAM FOR RE-EXAMINATION OF APARTMENT SCANDAL. OPPOSITION DEMAND FOR RESIGNATION OF MANY MINISTERS WAS SIMILARLY BLOCKED. ONLY CONCRETE OPPOSITION VICTORY WAS RELEASE OF LIST CONTAINING 661 NAMES OF NON-HYUNDAI EMPLOYEES WHO RECEIVED APARTMENTS, AND JUSTICE MINISTER'S PLEDGE TO INVESTIGATE ABOUT HALF OF THESE (NOT COVERED IN PROSECUTOR'S JULY 14 REPORT).

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3. EDUCATION MINISTER PAK APOLOGIZED FOR TEACHER LICENSING SCANDAL. NDP QUESTIONED PAK ON HOW MANY STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED/INJURED DURING JUNE DEMONSTRATIONS (PAK DID NOT ANSWER); STATUS OF CHONNAM UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (PAK REPLIED THEY HAD RESIGNED AND ISSUE WAS CONCLUDED); AND EXPLANATION OF CH'ONJU CATHOLIC PRIEST INCIDENT

(PAK "REGRETTE" INCIDENT AND SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO MATTER). ALL OF ABOVE THREE TOPICS, WHICH HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN REPORTED IN PRESS, RECEIVED VERNACULAR PRESS COVERAGE.

4. IN ADDITION TO QUESTIONS ON SONG NAK-HYON, JUDICIARY COMMITTEE WAS SCENE FOR INQUIRY ON NDP FORMER REP KIM IN-KI. JUSTICE MINISTER DENIED THAT KIM HAD BEEN PRESSURED TO RESIGN WHILE IN PRISON.

5. COMMITTEE PROVIDED VENUE FOR NDP TO SHARPLY ATTACK GOVERNMENT AND RECEIVE EXTENSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE. ALTHOUGH MEETINGS ENDED WITH LITTLE CONCRETE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR NDP, GOVERNMENT COULD NOT HELP BEING EMBARRASSED BY PUBLIC AIRING OF SCANDALS. HOWEVER, RECENT ROKG ACTIONS (PROSECUTOR WILL CONTINUE APARTMENT INVESTIGATIONS; SONG ARRESTED; MANY ARRESTS IN LICENSING SCANDAL) ARE LIKELY TO MOLLIFY PUBLIC OPINION SOMEWHAT.
GLEYSTEN

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